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ABSTRACT

Although television presentations of theater, ballet and opera often lose something of the original, it can equally well be argued that almost any presentation of these arts on television provides large number of people with some access to arts which would otherwise be inaccessible. In addition, even though direct presentations of many works of art suffer from the translation to television, it is possible for talented people to creatively adopt classics to the medium of television. In fact, television, especially cable television, and perhaps two-way cable television in particular, may have its greatest potential as a new creative medium for works of art, rather than as serving existing arts. Finally, cable television provides sufficient channel capacity that larger numbers of educational and informational programs about the arts will become feasible. For all these reasons, then, the onset of cable television provides a golden opportunity for an expansion of the arts and their public. (RH)

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# CABLE TELEVISION AND THE ARTS

by

Richard Roud

March 15, 1971

A Report Prepared for the
SLOAN COMMISSION ON CABLE COMMUNICATIONS

The opinions expressed herein are the views of the author and do not reflect necessarily the opinions of the members of the Sloan Commission on Cable Communications or of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

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## . PREFACE

The advantages offered by a new system of cable television which would afford the possibility of the transmission of twenty-seven (or more) channels at once are, of course, enormous. For years now, ever since the introduction of television (and, indeed, of radio) many in America have despaired of the possibility of using this fantastically effective medium to serve what we call The Arts. The potential is there, but, until now, what must be called short-sighted commercial concerns have prevented any major utilization of the medium in any concerted or nation-wide way.

The problems of servicing what must be, at first, at least, by its very nature a minority audience (though not necessarily a small one) will of course remain, but cable television does seem to allow of other solutions. Although the main concern of this report is not the means by which such programs could be financed, an appendix will be found which does raise some of the problems and which tries to suggest some possible solutions.

A twenty-seven channel television system could bring us to the threshold of a new era in the arts, and one that will amount to nothing less than a revolution in the arts and their relation to society. Along with the opportunities this system affords, however, there are also a certain number of pitfalls which must be foreseen at this early stage.

And indeed, as Dr. William Schuman remarked about the not unrelated problem of programming for video-cassette: "The potential is enormous, but developing program content is going to be the biggest single challenge the field will face."

With this opinion, the author of this report can only concur. In order to come to grips as closely as possible with the problems, it has been thought best to divide the report into four main chapters. The first, called Transmission, deals with the direct (or semi-direct) transmission of dramatic performances, music recitals, ballet and opera performances etc. There are many advantages to this kind of program, and indeed, many people will think it is the most important service cable television can render to the arts; there are, however, many difficulties and drawbacks as well, which are discussed quite fully in this chapter.

Chapter Two, called The Thing Itself refers to the possibility of presenting on television works of art in their original form, without thereby diminishing them. Indeed, some cases will be discussed where television broadcasting can even enhance certain kinds of art works.

Chapter Three deals with the problem of Instructional Films in the Arts. This category is one which is not often mentioned, but it can play an important part in any comprehensive arts program, not least because it can be individually related to the viewer. Such programs will help to answer the possible objection that television, even cable television, is producing a generation of spoon-fed passive viewers. It is also specially designed to serve those millions who live in towns and cities far distant from the large cultural centers.

Chapter Four deals with a much less controversial subject, Information and Explanation Programs. This sort of program has heretofore played the largest part

in commercial and non-commercial television arts programming. This is no reason, indeed, why it should be dropped, but certain attendant problems are discussed, and suggestions as to how to avoid certain dangers inherent in this kind of programming are set forth.

Finally, a brief Conclusion which does not so much summarize as it tries to establish some sort of order of priority.

**TRANSMISSION**

The first kind of arts program we should consider is at once both the most obvious, and yet perhaps the most controversial. Indeed, there are many people who feel that the one way in which cable television can best serve the arts is by the direct transmission of dramatic performances; operas, ballets, music recitals and the lot. And indeed there are many advantages to this kind of programming. First of all, it is the simplest kind to produce. Secondly, it would solace all those who worry about the phenomenon of "elitism" or of the "exclusivity" of the arts, especially those supported by the public or the government. An institution like the Metropolitan Opera House can only hold some 3,000 people, and yet it is supported as a "public service." Would not those who are asked every year to make up its deficit feel a little better about the way their money is being spent if they could be assured that the audience for an opera performance was not 3,000 people, but more in the order of 300,000, or even 3 million, thanks to cable television networking?

It is also tempting to think that there might be more government support of the arts -- from federal, state, and metropolitan sources -- if the legislators were made to understand that the money they were voting was for a larger group of tax-payers than is now the case? In the particular case of New York State, this could well resolve the problem that now bedevils any New York City organization that goes to Albany for support -- the charge that the State cannot spend its money on something that is

of benefit only to the metropolitan area. If the legislators in Albany could be persuaded that the money spent would also benefit their constituents in Troy, Utica, Elmira, etc., then their attitude would surely, so the argument runs, be more generous.

There is a proposition afoot now, I believe, to transmit some fifty-odd programs of the New York City Ballet and New York City Opera Company on television: would not this be a perfect example of how television could bring the arts into every home that wants them? Would not this, in fact, be the one major way in which cable television could fulfil its duty to enrich culturally the lives of its listeners?

There is another side, however, to the question. Since many people in America point to the example Britain's television, the BBC, has given to the world as a model for our own, it is perhaps not irrelevant to summarize here the recent controversy that has taken place in Britain over precisely this question.

The distinguished television, Humphrey Burton, who was largely responsible for the excellent series of arts programs called "Monitor" began the controversy in that way in which most British controversies begin, with a letter to The London Times. In it, he and his co-signer, Ian Hunter, suggested that there should be regular relays from Covent Garden Opera and Ballet as well as from other theaters. Such relays, they wrote, would be a justification for the hefty subsidies that the national companies receive from the government and hence from the tax-payers.

The first reply to this suggestion came from the well-known theatrical director, Peter Hall, past director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and present head of Covent Garden. He admitted that "public money is making our artistic standards admired all over the world, and although the subsidies are small by comparison with other

countries [here he is doubtless thinking of Germany], it is understandable that the taxpayer is more eager to enjoy this use of his money than many another Government sponsored activity. But there are not enough seats to go round. And there are not enough large touring theatres where facilities on either side of the curtain rise above those of a Victorian slum. Television seems to provide an answer. It can publish the goods in millions of homes. The taxpayer will be mollified and the politician relieved."

"But", goes on Mr. Hall, "when Humphrey Burton, who is a great man of television, says that this medium can nearly capture the original experience, I must listen to him. But I don't believe it. I have never seen it happen. I have always found that the unengaged and unimpressed eye of the camera betrays and finally ridicules the essential nature of the theatre and opera." (Italics mine)

And here we reach the major point at issue: does the simple and unadorned transmission of cultural events actually transmit them. In other words, is it better to have a photograph which does not do the sitter justice than no photograph at all? Is a scratchy record of Caruso better than nothing; is a badly colored reproduction of the Sistine Ceiling better than nothing?

Put like this, the answer is obvious: yes, all of these inadequate equivalents are better than nothing. Just as Dwight MacDonald once so pungently remarked about the claim that phonograph records inhibited home music-making, those string quartets round the kitchen table in Des Moines may be better than a record of the Budapest Quartet, but that he personally had never experienced them, and he doubted whether many others had either.

However, cable television is not faced with such a simple choice. There are other possibilities, but before going into these, we should first carefully consider the arguments made by men like Peter Hall against direct transmission and those of others for -- not because we are obliged to choose one or the other, but in order to see how we can have the advantages without the accompanying disadvantages.

For there are disadvantages to direct transmission. As Hall went on to say, "There are the repetitious shots, the compromise lighting, the bad sound, and the tense and tiring circumstances which can make the performers give their worst rather than their best. All these disadvantages, however, are perhaps worth having if we are to reach a wider public. My objections are deeper. A piece of theater is not a physical act like a horse-race, but an imaginative game agreed on between the performer and his audience. The camera finds difficulty in participating in this game unless it is itself the audience. If a good actor walks on to a bare rostrum and informs the audience with words of sufficient quality that they are in ancient Rome, they will believe him. An act of imagination has been provoked. But if a camera photographs this, it will reveal nothing but a bare rostrum and the disappointing visual image can even make the words seem ludicrous. It is at this moment that we, as viewers, notice the ancient naivety of the theatre, and the 'unreal' nature of its settings."

Finally, Hall concludes his major objection by saying, "A good outside broadcast may make the viewer wish he was at Covent Garden or remind him of an evening when he was. But I cannot believe it finally advances the cause of opera. Those who love the medium are disappointed. Those who think it is old-fashioned, artificial, and nonsensical are provided with plenty of new evidence. The same goes for the theatre."

There are many obvious objections to make to Mr. Hall's purist stand, and they were not long in coming. The ballet critic of the London Observer remarked, not without cogency, that "nobody in his senses would claim that a camera-recorded version of a stage production is the equivalent of a flesh-and-blood performance, any more than the most perfect reproduction of a painting is the same as the original, or that listening to a record is the same experience as attending a concert."

But, he goes on, how many young people have been first inspired to learn more by hearing a piece of music on a cheap transistor set or by seeing a reproduction of a Rembrandt. Are these to be barred, too? To deny the inexperienced masses even the sub-flavored crumbs which fall from the West End tables of the rich on the grounds that they give an unfair impression of the cuisine, seems to me an example of nervous and exclusive art snobbery. Surely, he concludes, a more positive approach would be to have enough faith in the original to believe that it would survive imperfect reproduction and to be prepared to put up with a little mockery if it is the price of public benefit. I believe that people have the right to get a peep at what they are paying for.

Now, it could be advanced that Mr. Bland's reply is more than a little demagogic. Surely, Mr. Hall's point was not to deprive the public of "even the crumbs"; it was to give them something better than mere crumbs. In fact, not to fob them off with a pale copy, but rather to prepare teleivision productions which would come off better than a direct transmission from the theater.

But one sees Mr. Bland's point too, and it is one that Humphrey Burton himself came back to; that his concern was not with artistic perfection but with social utility. He believes that there are millions of people who are capable of enjoying opera and

good drama yet who feel themselves to be excluded from attending the national theaters. Excluded, he explains, not only by cost but, equally important, by custom and, he adds, class. And he goes on to claim that television could bridge such gaps; he, for one, would put with a bit of compromise lighting for the chance to see, say, Peter Brook's Midsummer Night's Dream, or an act from Wagner's Ring once a month or so. And he goes on to remind British viewers of the really splendid transmission of the Callas-Gobbi Tosca that was televised several years ago.

This controversy may seem to be essentially British -- for one thing, none of the contributors bothers to raise the problems of cost -- surely the musicians union would not simply agree to let their services go out on television without demanding extra payment -- and where would that come from? In any case, it is certain that in America this would create important problems. Nonetheless, it has been felt important to go into this controversy at some length, because it does pin-point some of the problems that will face cable television. Now, these problems are not insoluble -- as long as we are aware that they exist, as long as we admit that they exist. And, as always, the answer will have to be found in some sort of compromise.

Many of Mr. Hall's objections are valid. Half a loaf is sometimes worse than none. On the other hand, many viewers would be prepared to put up with, to make allowances for bad lighting, and flat reproduction if the event were important enough. And it seems likely that if direct relay of performances were perhaps limited to opening nights, the excitement of the event would compensate for shortcomings in the reproduction of that event. Some people might be put off, it is true, by the flatness of the sets, the artificiality of the medium. But the excitement of a Broadway first night might be some kind of compensation. Audiences would look upon such a program as half-way between a cultural experience and a news event -- they

would be present -- however imperfectly -- at, say, the birth of a new star, or a new playwright.

Looking back, one can remember the visit of the Old Vic to America in 1946, with Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson. The company was in New York for only a few weeks, and the author of this report, if a personal note may be injected, was at that time l' 'ng in Boston. It was impossible for him to go to New York, so when it was announced that Peer Gynt was going to be broadcast on radio -- sound radio, mind you -- he was very excited. And after he had listened to that sound radio version, he did not feel cheated. He did not feel that he had been palmed off with something inferior. He knew, as would any reasonable person, that what he had heard was only a pale copy of the original but -- and this surely is the point -- it was better than nothing. In more recent years, to continue in the personal vein, the author was unable to see Callas in the Covent Garden production of Tosca -- tickets were, as the saying goes, unavailable for love or money. And when the author saw the television transmission of Act Two, he felt that he had at least some idea of the glories of that performance.

On the other hand, this must not be taken as blanket approval of the practice of direct transmission. Surely, it would be best if such relays could be supplemented by productions designed, or at least adapted, for television. For one thing, a simple means of using television to heighten an artistic experience rather than to diminish could be achieved by the simple and fairly inexpensive method of providing English sub-titles when operas in foreign languages are transmitted. For the novice, the beginners, this would more than compensate for the atmosphere of the opera house, the direct experience. Earlier generations of Americans used to follow the libretto while listening to the Saturday afternoon broadcasts of the Metropolitan opera; how

much more appealing would-it be to have those Saturday afternoon broadcasts on television with the English translations in sub-title form. Providing they were sensibly done -- not overly complete, and properly translated into real English and not singer's English -- one might confidently predict that the audience for opera would immediately double.

Secondly, it should be possible for theatrical performances to be adapted without too much expense or difficulty for television transmission. Humphrey Burton himself admits that when he went to Vienna last year to film Leonard Bernstein's production of Fidelio, he was careful to attempt to "translate" that production into television terms. It is possible for a talented television director to devise methods of filming which will obviate most of Mr. Hall's objections. Not all of them, but most.

So it seems obvious that while direct transmission of opera and drama is certainly desirable, it need not, must not, be allowed to be the only form of opera or theater on television. There should also be the chance for imaginative directors to produce for television operas, or plays; such productions could at once both take advantage of the transfer and eliminate its defects. It is not a question of choosing between the two methods. Rather, the advantages and disadvantages of both methods must be clearly understood, and then some kind of compromise between the two methods be developed. It has already been suggested that direct transmission would be best suited to opening night situations where the excitement and glamour of the event would compensate for any artistic deficiencies. On the other hand, it would seem that direct transmission should be avoided in the case of the more difficult or stylized works. For example, a direct transmission of La Boheme would be more suitable than one of Orfeo -- either Gluck's or Monteverdi's. A direct transmission of a play by Arthur Miller would be more satisfactory than a direct transmission of a play by

Strindberg. Common sense must be used in determining which plays or opera can take the ruthless scrutiny of direct transmission, and which need to be 'adapted' in order to pass through the television barrier.

Ballet, for example, provides a perfect example of an art form which is more difficult to transmit directly than opera, for it can all too easily seem ridiculous at worst and unsatisfying at best, given its artificial and abstract nature. It is all very well to have the camera in close-up on Margot Fonteyn's face, but then one loses all sight of what the corps de ballet is up to, and it is obviously that combination of principals and corps which makes up the essence of classical ballet that will be lost. No, most classical ballet would have to be staged for television; on the other hand, a work like Petrushka, which depends so much on mime, could doubtless be easily transmitted live. Again, it is a question of examining the work itself and deciding on that basis, rather than on a theoretical argument about whether the 'people' have a right to see the work on their television sets.

Finally, let us take up the problem of the transmission of non-theatrical music: symphonies, chamber music, soloists. There has been quite a bit of this on television on both sides of the pond. It is rarely satisfactory to either musicians or to those sensitive to the art of television. All too often the camera wanders idly about the orchestra, sometimes following the 'theme' from instrument to instrument, while occasionally coming back to the conductor when he is about to perform some startling gesture. There is nothing 'wrong' with this kind of filming, but, on the other hand, it adds little to the musical experience. The problem may indeed be insoluble -- for visuals can add little to the musical experience. But at the same time, they can detract greatly. 'Imaginative' and 'artistic' television producers try to overlay the music with film clips, which they feel somehow will 'express' the

music. Or else they let their cameras swing madly through the orchestra, again to 'express' an allegro or something of that sort. All too often, this kind of visual experience serves only to submerge the music. In other cases, a close-up of the flutist playing some heavenly melody ruins that melody, for alas, the photogenic qualities of a musician are not always equal to his musical talents.

Many people have been tempted to declare that such orchestral concerts have no place on television and belong back on radio or phonograph records. This is doubtless too strong a reaction, but one must put in a plea for discretion on the part of the television director. One could sum it up with: let the music speak for itself. Don't get in the way. Such abnegation, such self-denial comes hard to any director worth his salt, but it is surely necessary if musical programs are not going to have a negative affect.

## THE ACTUAL EXPERIENCE

An obvious conclusion that could be drawn from the foregoing is that, whatever the claims of the tax-payer, or the duty of television to come to the aid of the culturally under-privileged, its first duty should be to present to its audiences as close as possible an equivalent to the actual experiencing of works of art. As the foregoing has tended to show, very few of the arts can be presented on television with as much force or power as in their original forms. So, on the one hand, we have the problem of re-creating for television theatrical or operatic experiences with as much creative fidelity as possible; the task is difficult but not impossible. And, on the other hand, we should now consider the possibilities that cable television can offer for presenting 'original' works of art.

Obviously, the one art that suffers least from direct transmission by television is ... the cinema. Of course, the smaller screen can to some degree distort or change the experience of seeing a film in a theatre with a live audience; but the difference in the experience is much smaller than it is with the drama, opera, or the other arts. What is true of the art of the cinema is even more applicable to the art of television itself. People all over the world have lamented the fact that so many creative and intelligent television programs have disappeared either into the dust-heap, or into some fathomless ampex archive. Cable television would offer the ideal chance of bringing back to viewers some of the more remarkable

achievements of television over its first twenty years of existence. There is something obscene about the way in which so much effort, so much achievement has been expended for a single, or even a half dozen screenings, and then to disappear, for all practical purposes, forever.

Obviously, there are also complicated legal and contractual problems involved in the re-run of older television programs -- such complex ones that one thinks that the largest division of any company devoted to programming cable television would have to be its legal department. But it is generally agreed that if the desire or the need for something is strong enough, ways can always be found to circumvent most difficulties.

The problem is much simpler when one comes to the transmission of great films. Most film producers have retained rights to their films, and there need not be any complicated contractual manoeuverings. And when one thinks of the enormous treasure-house of world cinema over the past seventy years, much of which is unknown to the commercial television repertory, one cannot help but think that it is in the presentation of the art of the cinema that cable television can most simply and best fulfil some of its obligation to the arts.

The coming cassette revolution will make this all the easier as it seems likely that a large number of films which have been heretofore difficult of access should now become quite easily available. Interviews with some European art-film producers have made clear the fact that they would be most cooperative. Indeed, one of them confided that this development would be, he felt, the crowning of his career: at last, he would not have to depend on the caprices of the New York City art-house market, and the great films in his catalogue would at last be easily available to people all over America -- and eventually, of course, all over the world.

Some television people have nourished for far too long a time the prejudice that the time devoted to re-runs of old films is a betrayal of the 'specificity' of television, a betrayal of its nature. This view, however, seems to be on the wane. For as time goes by, it seems less and less clear what the alleged specificity of television consists of. More and more people are beginning to feel that any sound-picture combination on celluloid acetate can be shown either projected on a wall or transmitted over the air. And indeed, it is difficult to sustain the contrary.

Naturally, presentation of films on television now leaves much to be desired. There is not only the problem of the splintering of the experience through commercials, but little attention is paid to the proper re-creation of the film experience. Sequences are arbitrarily cut; little heed is paid to preserving the original format or shape of the film: bits are cut off from top and bottom or from side, just as it was in those difficult days of the change-over from Academy Ratio to wide screen in theaters, when one had the disturbing experience of seeing a Fred Astaire film with his feet cut off -- i.e. invisible below the screen because of the attempt to 'widen' the image.

It has often been maintained that it is impossible to show sub-titled films on television, and this belief has prevented an enormous number of world-renowned films from reaching the small screen. It is no longer true that sub-titles cannot be read on a small screen. New techniques developed in Belgium and Holland have given us a new kind of sub-title, one in which the white letters, which indeed often disappeared into the background, are now outlined with a hair-line of black, thus making them readable against the whitest of clouds. True, the initial cost of sub-titling is not low, but this could easily be amortized over the years. It has been

said that the great majority of Americans do not like sub-titled films, and there is doubtless some truth in this. But it is quite possible that what these people do not like is not the actual sub-titles but the atmosphere of the kind of cinemas in which they are played. After all, the literacy rate in America is much higher than it is, say, in Greece or Portugal, and in these countries all foreign films -- and that means the great majority of films shown -- are sub-titled and as such accepted by the majority of the audiences. Perhaps the audience in America will not, at the beginning, be large for sub-titled films, but surely one of the great advantages of cable television is that it can cater to some degree to minorities. And one might predict with confidence that such an audience will increase. It was not so many years ago that it was categorically stated that British films could never be popular in the United States outside the Eastern Seaboard -- and recent years have proved that this is no longer so. The sub-title gap may be harder to breach than the pronunciation gap, but it will surely be breached one day. Just as silent films had long been thought impossible to transmit on present-day television; we have now seen that in certain selected cases, they can be fairly popular on the small screen. The great chance of cable television is that it is coming along in a period of great cultural change; it can profit by this revolution in popular taste, and it can effect it too.

The presentation of cinema on cable television will not only serve the art of the cinema, however. It can also help serve the other arts as well, and at a lower cost than original programs or direct transmissions. Take the theater, for example. It seems quite possible that a screening of Elia Kazan's film version of A Streetcar Named Desire would be just as valuable a contribution to the drama as either the transmission of a revival, or getting Mr. Kazan to re-stage the play. Cocteau's own film of his stage-play, Les Parents Terribles, would be as great a contribution

to a study of the French drama of the 20th century than any re-staging of the play. The point is surely that there have been films which have creatively adapted their original to the screen and it is these adaptations which would best serve the original on television.

On the other hand, there are bad examples, too; the films of Laurence Olivier's Othello, or the National Theatre's The Three Sisters would not, one imagines, fall into the category of creative adaptation, for they were, to most people, simply 'canned' theater, with all the attendant lack of freshness that canned goods generally possess. Indeed, to push the metaphor further, one could maintain that direct transmission is more correctly comparable to the 'fresh-frozen' or the 'quick-freezing' process where most of the original savour is preserved, unlike the uncreative 'canned' versions, which, by and large, are but pale and bland copies of copies.

A direct experience of the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture is obviously more difficult to achieve, but one could say that programs like Sir Kenneth Clark's Civilization series, although they properly belong below in the category of Information and Explanation, also did allow the viewer to at least see certain key works of art, and while this is obviously less satisfactory than the direct confrontation with the original, nevertheless goes some way towards providing an artistic experience.

Literature could be well served on television, too; at least to some degree. The poetry readings which, in lecture halls, and coffee houses, have proved so popular in the past ten years, could very well be presented without any significant loss on television. Again, this is for a minority audience, but not all that small a one.

The readings of the late Dylan Thomas and Robert Frost brought out thousands of people all over the country. And if one extends the notion of poetry to men like Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan (and why not?) then it is clear that we are no longer talking about a minority audience at all.

But, apart from the heritage of the cinema and television, the role of cable television should lie in the creation of its own programs, its own adaptations of artistic experience. In the section devoted to direct transmission, I quoted at length Peter Hall's objections to this kind of programming. However, he did go on to mention an example, not of direct transmission, but of the kind of semi-direct presentation, a creative adaptation. The example he mentioned was some extracts on British television of Peter Brooks' production of A Midsummer Night's Dream: "on a plain white background, brightly coloured costumes and well-lit faces made Shakespeare's text more meaningful than I have ever heard it in the theatre -- and certainly better than when I tried to have actors speaking blank verse in a real wood. [Here Mr. Hall is referring to his own disastrous film of the same play]. Is this perhaps a pointer? The camera was making a new screen convention primarily by the graphic use of colour. I would like to try to film a classic in a large neutrally coloured studio. In this space I would place the people and essential props and furniture of the opera or play. Everything necessary must be as real as the people -- and as strongly coloured. It should be lit well, composed well visually, and performed well. It would take time -- more time than an optimistic direct transmission -- but less time than a film. We might thus make the camer a the ally of artificiality rather than something which discredits it. We have to find a new language. But letting television cameras into the auditoriums won't help. This is the way to reach a wider audience."

However important the contribution that cable television can provide in making available the arts on a wider scale, it must not be forgotten that its role should not be only to serve the other arts: it, too, can be a valid art-form, like the cinema and conventional television. Programs can be created for cable television which by their very nature are more suitable for it than for cinema audiences or the watchers of ordinary television.

It is hoped that, in the future, cable television can be much more responsive to the needs of the community than the cinema or conventional television, and it is in this area that cable television can perhaps play its most important and autonomous role. In many arts today, and in particular the theater, the accent has been more and more placed on the creative interaction of audience and stage, of instituting a dialectical relationship between the two. If the experiments in two-way television are satisfactorily completed, one can imagine a whole new art form arising; one that will surely partake of the other arts, but which will be different from them as well.

Although this may not be for some time yet, we must not lose sight of the possibilities that cable television will afford, not only to serve the other arts, but to create its own as well.

In the meantime, one very important thing that cable television could also do would be to widen the film repertory. That is to say, that a local cable television station could -- indeed, should -- do its best to encourage budding talent in its locality. And one of the ways it could do this would be to show the films of young film-makers, students, or even children. Such films, although obviously not widely popular in nature, might well become so, because of the local and human-interest angle. People are always interested to see things done in their

own town, filmed in locations they know, dealing perhaps with problems that are very familiar to them, and which are of great concern to them. It would be this kind of interest that would make up for any short-comings as art or as entertainment that such programs would have.

There will doubtless -- and rightly so -- be great pressure on local stations to provide a local service, one which actually serves the community, and this is one way in which this could be effected. And by so doing, the station would be serving, not only the arts, but society, for it is generally admitted that one of the major problems of our cities is the lack of cultural inter-penetration.

Underground video groups are at present quite active in programming along these lines (Raindance, Global Village, Videofreex). The oddness of the names should not blind one to the importance of the kind of work they are trying to do. Nor should an aversion to their politics prevent anyone from seeing the relevance of their attempts. And just as they are providing a rival source of information to the large networks, so surely, cable television should in its way be trying to do the same thing. Whole sections of the community feel themselves beyond the pale, and as far as television coverage of their lives and milieu goes, they are. Cable television could and should do something to make sure that news broadcasts, for example, are not restricted to the blandest of pap. This perhaps is taking us outside the scope of this paper -- cable television and the arts -- but, then again, perhaps not. The great dream of the 20th century is for an arts structure that will be more broadly based than it is at present, and one way of achieving this is by first of all bringing the community together.

INSTRUCTIONAL FILMS IN THE ARTS

This would seem to be a field in which cable television could do much, for if a country is to have a healthy artistic life, it is essential that as many people as possible participate in the arts -- as opposed to a purely spectator relationship. There is some precedent for this sort of programming, as witness the enormous success on NET of such programs as Julia Child's The French Chef and the one on Gardening.

The same sort of program could well be used to further an understanding of the arts, as well as to foster participation by the viewer. For example, there exists already a certain number of such programs -- on film. Argo Record company in England, a division of Decca, produced a series of six twenty minute films on violin playing, called Six Lessons with Yehudi Menuhin. The programs dealt with such varied matters as: 1) introduction to violin playing, including proper techniques of breathing, standing, and various preliminary exercises. 2) The technique of bowing, and the general use of the right hand. Part 3 dealt with fingering on the left hand, 4 with further instruction in bowing, 5 went more deeply into left hand fingering, and the 6th dealt with the coordination of right and left, and concluded with the performance of a piece by Mr. Menuhin.

These programs do not deal with interpretation, but rather with technique, although they do include a review of Menuhin's own theory of violin playing. Menuhin

himself narrates the films and is the chief (and only) 'actor' in them. It seems that such programs could be of enormous interest, first of all to the aspiring violin player, especially outside the large metropolitan areas, whose teacher is likely to be, however competent, somewhat less advanced in his or her technique than Yehudi Menuhin. It is true that the degree to which such a program could help a young violinist would be limited by the lack of any two-way contact. However, it does not seem impossible that in the future, what with two-way television, along the lines of the Sunnydale California experiment, it may indeed be possible to have some kind of direct instruction via television.

This sort of program, however, need not be limited to actual practitioners of the violin. It is more than possible that music-lovers in general would be very interested to know more about how the sounds they love are actually produced. And, just as it is true that the Cooking and Gardening programs are watched by many people who are not likely actually to carry out the lessons that are given on them, so many people who will never pick up a violin may find that their knowledge of music and their appreciation of it will be considerably heightened by knowing more about instrumental technique.

Of more direct interest to students of music, of whatever age, would be a kind of program which would closely resemble what has already been done on phonograph records: the Music-Minus-One series, in which, for example, a recording of a string quartet is made, minus one of the instruments. The record is sold, along with the score of the work, and in the privacy of one's home, the aspiring violinist, or cellist, or whatever, plays along with the professionals. Such records have been quite successful, and the repertory was quite varied: singers, for example, could buy records of piano or orchestral accompaniment, and this sort of aid was of great

help to those living outside the metropolitan areas, or even to those within. It is not difficult to imagine that cable television programs along the same lines would be of even greater help to the music student, for he would be able to see his 'colleagues' and this fact of 'playing along with them' would be even better than the purely aural experience heretofore available on phonograph records.

A whole series of films already exists on 16mm which are devoted to one instrument of the orchestra: Timpany, tuba, trombone, trumpet, etc., which explain the history and development of the instrument as well as how they are played, and what their function in a symphony orchestra is. The instrument is literally taken to pieces so that the student, or simply the music-lover, is better aware of what makes it sound the way it does.

But music is not the only art in which instructional films would be valuable. Ballet or modern dance could be taught through such programs. Again, films like this already exist, such as the Encyclopedia Britannica's Steps of the Ballet, which demonstrates basic ballet positions and movements, explains their significance, and illustrates the work of the choreographer, composer and designer. NBC's Wisdom series has such films as the one devoted to two modern American dancers, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn in which they demonstrate the fundamentals of their art.

McGraw Hill's catalog features a whole series of films devoted to acting technique -- The Function of Gestures, Stage Fright and what to do about it, Using Your Voice, Getting yourself across. These films are actually designed not only for the budding actor but for all those who need to know something about dramatic means of expression, which includes a great number of people.

Most existing films dealing with the Fine Arts are devoted to appreciation and history, but Britannica films do feature a series of films by Eliot O'Hara in which he actually teaches technique -- e.g., Brush Techniques, Color Keying, Oriental Brushwork, Painting an Abstraction, Painting Shadows, Painting with Calligraphy, Rhythm in Paint, etc. The same catalog also features lessons devoted to the Graphic Arts -- Block printing, Mural Painting, Woodcuts, etc.

Nor would such programs have to be limited to the so-called 'Fine' Arts. There are many other fields of great popularity and importance which fall somewhere along the border between arts and crafts: needlework, weaving, modeling, pottery, etc. It would be important, however, that such programs should not be entirely devoted to the how-to-do-it aspects: there is a chance here for broadening the interests of the viewer. Mosaic work has become a very popular hobby in America in recent years, particularly with the elderly. There is no reason why programs on this technique should not also be broad enough to take in appreciation as well as craft. For example, such a program on mosaics could lead from lessons in the craft to considerations of great mosaic work -- the Ravenna or Pompeian mosaics. It seems more than likely that the best way to lead people to an understanding and an appreciation of the great art of the past and present would be precisely from this angle, leading them from their hobby or pastime towards a wider appreciation of what is actually involved. And it does seem that, for example, even a person who is 'painting-by-the-numbers' is in a much better position for an indoctrination into the art of painting than someone who has never had a brush in his hand. By fusing the crafts approach with a more general artistic approach, it does seem that one would not only reach a great many more people, but one would find them much more receptive because the 'cultural' aspect of the program would

not be so immediately apparent -- and therefore not so frightening to the kind of person who thinks he would not be able to 'understand' a serious program on the arts.

## INFORMATION AND EXPLANATION PROGRAMS

Information programs would present a minor, but nonetheless essential, feature of arts programming on cable television. Their primary usefulness would, of course, be to inform viewers about arts programs soon to be telecast. But such programs should also call attention to cultural events that are happening in the community: where, when, and how viewers could attend such performances. An example of a very useful local service would be to inform viewers when there happened to be seats remaining for sale on the night of an event. There might be some resistance from theaters and concert halls -- who never like to advertise that they are not full -- but on the other hand there is a chance that they may wish to cooperate. This would be an important service, because all too often people are kept from even trying to attend events because they have some idea that it would be impossible to get tickets. Alas, as organizers of cultural events know all too well, this is not always the case.

Such programs could also perform the eminently useful service of broadening cultural appreciation simply by informing viewers of the existence of events of which they may be completely unaware. Something like this has been done on New York's Municipal station, WNYC, but on a small scale. One could also include reviews of events which have taken place the day before. Or one could present the confrontation of a group of citizens with, say, an art exhibition -- eliciting

their responses, discussing them, again with a view towards cultural inter-penetration and to avoid elitist preaching. Such programs could also include reviews of forthcoming books -- either on subjects relating to the other arts, or works of literature. It has been stated that the average American hardly ever visits a bookstore. This may be because he is ashamed to admit on entering that he doesn't know what to ask for, and is cowed by the atmosphere and the sales-people. Such programs could do much to alleviate these feelings of inferiority by familiarizing the viewer with recent books. Or, better still, each week, the local station could present a program in a particular bookstore -- introducing the salesmen, showing the customer where books of different sorts are kept, and thus generally familiarizing him with a place which is all too often terra incognita.

Explanatory or Exegetical programs would be of course more complex. These would be attempts to explain, to educate, to bring audiences to a better understanding of the different arts. These programs would ideally be linked both to performances given in the area, as well as to cable television presentations.

In fact, it is in this area that television has heretofore done some of its best work in relation to the arts. And the already produced programs for NET, or even the BBC, or other foreign stations, would exist as a sort of ready-made 'bank' of material on ampex or film. Ultimately, the cassette libraries will no doubt be useful for this kind of programming.

Now, although it will be 'educational', even didactic on occasion, this sort of program need not be dull. The series of programs on great composers that Ken Russell produced for the BBC in Britain -- programs on Elgar, Debussy, Delius, Strauss, etc. - has been enormously popular.

For reasons explained above, such programs would make up the bulk of time devoted to those of the arts which do not lend themselves either to direct transmission or to re-creation, e.g. painting, sculpture, and architecture; literature. Fortunately, there already exists a great number of quite interesting films about the plastic arts, but it would not be wise for a station to rely too heavily on them, as they are often far from ideal. Nevertheless, the films on art by important directors like, say, Alain Resnais, would be very useful to start with.

Then there are films already in existence like the Leonard Bernstein series produced by CBS-TV on the meaning of music, What is a Melody, What is a Concerto, What makes Music Symphonic, which would be extremely useful in conjunction with, say, a transmission of a performance by Bernstein, or, perhaps, even by another conductor, thus allowing comparisons to be made.

These are simply examples to show how much material already exists along these lines, and how easy it would be to make more available. The difference is that up until now this kind of program has been almost all there was devoted to the arts. In an ideal system of cable television, this material would back-stop the more important job of actually presenting the arts themselves, rather than talking about them. Both are necessary, of course, but the proportion should be more weighted towards bringing the viewer the actual experience of a work of art or as close as we can get to it. A program dealing with, say, the life of the New York Philharmonic orchestra would doubtless be interesting, but surely it should be used in conjunction with the far more enriching experience of the thing itself.

Eventually, one could envisage, with the development of a dial-it-yourself service, a system whereby the viewer could prepare himself, as it were, at any

time, for a cultural experience, either live or on television, by being able on the evening before, to dial one of these explanatory/exegetical programs.

As with the information programs, however, one would want to have some degree of talk-back with the audience. This might have to await some two-way television system, but on the other hand, radio programs work on the telephoning-the-station system already, and the same could work with such telecasts, and would help to serve the same function as the questions and discussion periods which often follow lectures and which are occasionally the most rewarding part.

Again, one must try to avoid the whole atmosphere of culture being handed down from on high, an attitude which is both wrong in itself and one which is the most surely calculated to put people off. Also, one should try to involve young people as much as possible -- for the very good reason that they are the ones most influenceable and most apt to be responsive to new experience.

## CONCLUSION

The problems of programming are indeed complex, as we have seen. However, the rewards of such programming are commensurate with its demands. In this paper, we have tried to examine the various kinds of programs that would be possible and desirable. It should be emphasized, in conclusion, that if cable television is going to make a significant contribution to the Arts in America, it must attempt to achieve not just one or two of the different kinds discussed, but a balanced diet of all four. And it seems to the writer of this report that it must concentrate on what will be the hardest of all kinds of programs to produce, those which attempt either through some kind of direct transmission or adaptation of an outside event, or by creating a new work of art, to bring to its viewers that enrichment which only actual exposure to art itself can bring. Informational and explanatory programs are necessary; but they should ideally be meant not as substitutes for the real thing, but as preparation for it.

Until now, we Americans have been all too prone to keep cultural experience outside the mainstream of American life. We have enshrined it in marble halls -- the so-called Edifice complex -- we have segregated it in cultural ghettos -- Arts Centers -- and in so doing we have cut off the large mass of the population from it; equally important, art has been cut off from the cross-fertilizing which only an audience can give the artist and the work of art.

Here, with cable television we are all being given another chance -- probably our last one -- to extend the ideal of education which we all cherish to a different -- and, one can say, a higher level. We had better not muff it, because we won't get it again.

## APPENDIX

Obviously, one of the major problems confronting any ambitious attempt to serve the arts will be that of the financing of such programs. It has been pointed out that the audiences for such programs will be a minority one, but that this does not mean that it will be a small one. After all, programs such as the Kenneth Clark Civilization series reached people on NET; the Lincoln Center Day programs that CBS used to present every October reached an audience of ; cultural programs, on NET, such as had audiences of . Moving down to a slightly lower level, the BBC production of The Forsyte Saga reached millions on its two runs in the United States.

Therefore, it is entirely possible that some of the programs envisaged in this report could be financed by commercial sponsorship. There would seem to be a trend in American advertising away from mass and general audiences -- hence the decline of 'general' magazines, and the attendant rise of the specialist ones. Perhaps sponsors would look favorably on prestige advertising, such as this would be. Not only for the 'Prestige' involved, but because it would be possible to make out a case that the audience for arts programs might be just the kind of audience an advertiser would want to reach. In the beginning, at any rate, it would be safe (if sad) to say that such an audience would be likely to be in the middle to upper income bracket -- a fairly desirable market for certain kinds of advertisers.

Then, too, it must be considered that the kind of programming which has been discussed might not be as expensive to produce as one might think. International cooperation could be used to effect many economies. Taking an analogy from a similar field, the cost of large illustrated art books (the so-called 'coffee-table book') has been kept down by spreading the cost over several countries. The color plates have been printed for several different language versions, and the resulting economy has in some degree been passed on to the consumer. Or coming closer to television, the Eurovision system has been fairly effective in Europe, by providing outlets in the major European countries for programs produced by individual countries.

This spreading of costs could be effective, especially if there were to be a network of linked local stations. On the other hand, local programs could benefit from locally directed advertising of the sort that one rarely gets on today's stations.

But there are many dangers inherent in advertiser-supported programs; almost inevitably, there would be pressure from the advertisers, in spite of all their good intentions, for the program material to approximate more closely the sort of programs the public already views on commercial television.

As to the other possibility of financing such programs, some kind of pay-television system, there is much to be said on both sides. It is true that pay-television does not seem to have worked too well in the various test situations where it has been tried. Nonetheless, the Mayor's Advisory Task Force on City and Telecommunications Report of September 14, 1968 recommended that pay-television be given another try. It recommended that pay-television should be authorized on a trial basis to determine what sort of programs the public would be willing to pay for, and which not. Such a test, the report said, would present an opportunity to

compare the attitude of the viewing public towards programs presented with commercials with its attitude towards programs presented without, but requiring special payment.

And indeed, perhaps such a comparison would be the only way to find out just how the public would react. But one thing seems clear to the author of this report: any system which would involve the user in having to insert coins to watch certain programs would be doomed to failure. With the amount of free 'entertainment' available, he feels that the general public would be very reluctant to have actually to reach into its collective pocket and fork out a quarter or fifty cents, or whatever.

The author feels that a much more satisfactory system would be either one in which the viewer pays a standard monthly fee for the service, and watches as much as he wants, or, perhaps better still, a system whereby the television set would be metered, and the viewer would receive a bill at the end of the month. The latter system would have much less consumer resistance at the outset to face, and it would provide useful knowledge as to precisely how many people were watching which programs. It would also tend to separate in the viewer's mind the act of paying from the act of viewing, which psychologically would seem to be desirable.

However, there is still another system of financing cultural programs, but one so revolutionary in our society that one hardly dares mention it. That would be some sort of municipal, or state, or federal subsidy. It is not such an outrageous or impossible idea as it may seem at first glance. In spite of our long tradition of free enterprise, our public schools, and indeed, in some localities, our colleges, are supported largely or entirely by municipal, or state funds. If only it could be realised that the kind of arts programming we are talking about is <u>also</u> educational,

and, in fact, perhaps a more effective form of education than many of our conventional educational establishments, there might be some hope of government subsidy.

It may sound like a difficult task to achieve, especially in the present economic state, but we are living in a time of change, an epoch of transition, and it may be just the time in which such an important change in our thinking could be effected. And if our legislators could be convinced to make such an undertaking it might be found that a similar gesture of some sort might come from the unions.

It's all a question of priorities. Twenty years ago, the whole concept of Medicare would have seemed impossible in the United States, just as fifty years ago Social Security would have seemed ridiculously Utopian.

As we move towards the close of the 20th century, it is surely becoming more and more apparent to all opinion groups that there is something wrong with the ideals of our society. That perhaps there are other goals than those which are sought by the consumer society. Everyone admits there has been a breakdown in communcation between the various sectors that make up our society.

One is not trying to pretend that any series of programs on the arts carried by a system of cable television will bring us the Millenium in five years. But it would certainly make a useful start towards a better and richer life for millions of people.